

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 ACDA-12 AGRE-00
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DOE-11 FMC-01 TRSE-00 H-01 INR-07 INT-05 IO-13
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FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4011
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AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PARAMARIBO 120

BRUSSELS FOR USEEC

MEXICO FOR RFA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EFIS PLOS NS US
SUBJ: SURINAM-U.S. FISHING INDUSTRY TALKS

SUMMARY: TWO DAYS OF INFORMAL TALKS BETWEEN SURINAM
GOVERNMENT (GOS) OFFICIALS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF U.S.
FISHING INDUSTRY HELD IN PARAMARIBO JANUARY 23-24 WERE
CHARACTERIZED BY FRANK EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND MUTUAL UNDER-
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STANDING FOR INTERESTS OF CONCERNED PARTIES. ONCE RECENTLY
PASSED 200-MILE ZONE IS PROMULGATED, GOS WILL MOVE TOWARD
ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATION OF FISHERIES IN ITS ECONOMIC
ZONE WHICH WILL GIVE PRIORITY ATTENTION TO CONSERVATION
OF FISH AND SHRIMP STOCKS AS WELL AS PROTECTION OF
LOCALLY-BASED INDUSTRY. END SUMMARY.

1. AT REQUEST OF U.S. FISHING INDUSTRY, INFORMAL TALKS WERE HELD WITH CONCERNED GOS OFFICIALS IN PARAMARIBO JANUARY 23-24. SPOKESMAN FOR U.S. SIDE WAS NATIONAL SHRIMP CONGRESS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR WILLIAM UTZ; REPRESENTATIVES FROM CASTLE AND COOKE, CAPRICORN SEAFOODS, SAHLMAN SEAFOODS, SUPERIOR SEAFOODS AND VERSAGGI SEAFOODS COMPRISED REST OF U.S. GROUP WHICH ALSO INCLUDED A DEPARTMENT FISHERIES OFFICER. PRINCIPAL DISCUSSIONS WERE HELD WITH ACTING DIRECTOR OF AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND FISHERIES LIONARONS BUT SHORT MEETINGS WERE ALSO HELD WITH NEWLY APPOINTED MINISTERS OF AGRICULTURE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS.

2. TALKS WERE UNSTRUCTURED, FRANK AND CORDIAL. INDUSTRY VOICED ITS HOPE TO RETAIN ACCESS TO SHRIMP GROUNDS OFF THE GUIANAS, NOTING THAT U.S. FISHING INDUSTRY HAD PIONEERED AND DEVELOPED SHRIMPING IN THIS AREA. INTERESTS OF COMPANIES REPRESENTED IN U.S. INDUSTRY GROUP DIFFERED WITH SOME EMPLOYING LARGE NUMBERS OF U.S.-FLAG BOATS WITH OR WITHOUT U.S.-OWNED SHORE-BASED FACILITIES AND OTHERS CONCENTRATING ON PROCESSING FACILITIES (CASTLE AND COOKE'S OPERATION IN PARAMARIBO). INDUSTRY WAS UNANIMOUS IN SUPPORT OF A REGIONAL FISHING REGIME FOR THE AREA INCLUDING BRAZIL, BUT THOUGHT A VIABLE REGIONAL ARRANGEMENT COULD BE WORKED OUT EVEN WITHOUT BRAZILIAN PARTICIPATION.

3. GOS OFFICIALS SHARED INDUSTRY'S VIEW THAT ONLY A
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REGIONAL APPROACH TO FISHERIES QUESTIONS IN THE AREA WOULD MAKE INDUSTRY ECONOMICALLY VIABLE FOR ALL PARTIES CONCERNED. THEY WERE RECEPTIVE TO INDUSTRY PROPOSAL FOR JOINTLY CONDUCTED RESEARCH INTO SHRIMP RESOURCES OF THE GUIANAS. IN ADDITION, AT LUNCHEON HELD FOR GROUP JANUARY 23, DIRECTOR OF MINISTRY FOR GENERAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS INDICATED THAT SURINAM WOULD BEGIN TALKS WITH GUYANA ON FISHERIES QUESTIONS SOON AFTER 200-MILE LAW IS ON THE BOOKS. HE ANTICIPATED THAT SOME SORT OF INTERIM REGULATION WOULD GOVERN ACCESS TO SURINAM WATERS DURING PERIOD BETWEEN PROMULGATION OF LAW AND DRAWING UP OF ADMINISTRATIVE RULES AND LICENSING PROCEDURES. ECONOMIC AFFAIRS DIRECTOR SUGGESTED THAT SOME FORM OF GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT MIGHT BE NEEDED TO GOVERN OPERATIONS BY U.S. FLAG VESSELS.

4. AGRICULTURE DIRECTOR EMPHASIZED TWO ELEMENTS ON WHICH GOS WILL BASE ITS FISHING REGULATIONS IN 200-MILE ZONE. FIRST WAS THE NEED TO CONSERVE THE STOCKS OF FISH AND SHRIMP OFF SURINAM'S COAST. SECOND WAS A DESIRE TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE THE FISHING INDUSTRY OPERATING FROM SURINAM, INCLUDING A SURINAM-JAPANESE JOINT VENTURE (SUJAFI) AS

WELL AS CASTLE AND COOKE'S OPERATION WHICH EMPLOYS PRINCIPALLY SOUTH KOREAN BOATS AND CREWS. AS OUTLINED TO INDUSTRY GROUP, EVENTUAL REGULATIONS WILL PROCEED FROM ESTIMATES OF TOTAL ALLOWABLE CATCH IN THE WATERS OFF SURINAM, WITH PREFERENCE BEING GIVEN TO VESSELS OPERATING FROM SURINAM. AFTER THAT VESSELS OF COUNTRIES WHO HAD TRADITIONALLY FISHED OFF SURINAM WOULD BE GIVEN CONSIDERATION (THIS RULING OUR, IN LIONARONS' VIEW, APPROVAL OF NEW REQUESTS SUCH AS FROM CUBA.) LIONARONS DID OPEN THE POSSIBILITY THAT QUESTION OF LANDING CATCHES IN SURINAM MIGHT ALSO PLAY A ROLE IN FINAL REGULATIONS AND ASKED WHAT INDUSTRY'S REACTION WOULD BE TO SUCH A PROPOSAL. HE ADDED THAT HE WAS IN PRINCIPLE OPPOSED TO OTHER-SHIP OPERATIONS. MOST INDUSTRY REPS AGREED THIS WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE, ALTHOUGH MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS
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WERE CITED AND POSSIBLE REACTIONS BY OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE AREA WHERE THEIR SHIPS WERE BASED WERE A MATTER OF CONCERN. DISCUSSIONS REVEALED THAT THERE ARE ABOUT 135 U.S.-FLAG VESSELS NOW OPERATING OFF THE GUIANAS (ABOUT 70 FROM GEORGETOWN, 50 FROM FRENCH GUIANA, AND A HALF DOZEN EACH FROM TRINIDAD AND SURINAM.)

5. WITH REGARD TO EVENTUAL LICENSING ARRANGEMENTS, FEES, VESSEL AND CATCH LIMITS, MINAG OFFICIAL INDICATED NO DECISIONS HAVE YET BEEN MADE. HE OBSERVED THAT FIGURES OF 125-130 VESSELS BEING ALLOWED TO FISH OFF SURINAM HAD BEEN MENTIONED, BUT QUESTION OF LICENSE FEES, FOR EXAMPLE, HAS NOT YET BEEN ADDRESSED. CONSENSUS WAS THAT FORMAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS WOULD TAKE SOME TIME AFTER PROMULGATION OF BASIC LAW, WHICH DIRECTOR OF GENERAL AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS PREDICTED WOULD STILL TAKE ABOUT SIX WEEKS. OTHER OFFICIAL WERE SOMEWHAT MORE OPTIMISTIC BELIEVING THAT LAW WOULD BE ON THE BOOKS WITHIN TWO-THREE WEEKS.

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6 COMMENT: ALTHOUGH TALKS WERE INFORMAL AND NOT INTENDED TO REACH ANY SPECIFIC AGREEMENTS, THEY PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY FOR FACE-TO-FACE EXCHANGE OF VIEWS AND CONTRIBUTED TO IMPROVED UNDERSTANDING ON BOTH INDUSTRY AND GOS SIDES OF EACH OTHERS INTERESTS AND MOTIVES. GOS OFFICIALS DID STATE THAT IN CONTRAST TO GUYANESE APPROACH, WHICH RESULTED IN SUDDEN SEIZURE OF SEVEN VESSELS IN SEPTEMBER OF LAST YEAR, SURINAM WOULD NOTIFY THE UNITED NATIONS AND CONCERNED COUNTRIES AND WOULD SHOW UNDERSTANDING OF SITUATION OF VESSELS FISHING IN AREA AT TIME LAW GOES INTO EFFECT, GIVING ADEQUATE OPPORTUNITY FOR WORD OF GOS REQUIREMENTS TO REACH MASTERS. NONETHELESS, IT IS EMBASSY'S BELIEF THAT
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PRINCIPAL MOTIVATION IN GOS DETERMINATION OF FURTHER ACTIONS IN THIS AREA WILL BE ITS DESIRE TO PLACE SURINAM IN THE STRONGEST POSSIBLE BARGAINING POSITION WITH RESPECT TO NEIGHBORING GUYANA WHICH HAS ALREADY IMPLEMENTED WHAT IS CONSIDERED HERE TO BE A REGIME WHICH PROHIBITS FISHING BY FOREIGN-BASED BOATS (BECAUSE OF THE HIGH SCHEDULE OF FEES FOR SUCH VESSELS). THUS, INITIAL REGULATIONS FOR FISHING IN SURINAM WATERS ARE LIKELY NOT TO BE WHAT GOS DEEMS FINAL OR NECESSARILY TO ITS LONG-TERM ADVANTAGE NOR IN OUR JUDGEMENT ARE FINAL REGULATIONS TO BE EXPECTED VERY SOON. NEGOTIATIONS WHICH ARE NEEDED AFTER THE 200-MILE ZONE IS IN PLACE WILL DETERMINE THEIR FINAL FORM AS WELL AS THE FUTURE ECONOMIC VIABILITY OF EXPLOITING THE SHRIMP RESOURCES IN THE GUIANAS FOR THE U.S. FISHING INDUSTRY.
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